A

LETTER

FROM THE

PROTESTERS,

WITH AN

ANSWER

Thereunto, from an

ASSERTER

Of the Authority of the two late

GENERAL ASSEMBLIES,

AT

DUNDEE and EDINBURGH.

[illegible], 1693.

The Protesters Letter.

Right Reverend.

THe gracious dispensations of the Lord our God toward his People in this Land have been many and great, who can utter the Mighty Acts of the Lord, or who can shew forth all his praise? marvellous things did he in the sight of our Fathers, and this generation hath also seen his wonderfull Works to the Children of Men. How beautifull was the Spouse of Christ (in this Land) as *Tirzah*, comely as *Jerusalem*, and terrible as an Army with Banners? How great was the harmonie of the sons of *Zion*? they took sweet counsell together and walked unto the House of God in company: How good and how pleasant was it to see Brethren dwell together in Unitie? It was as the dew of *Hermon*, and as the dew that discended upon the Mountains of *Zion*, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore; but now he hath cast off and greatly abhored *Israel*, he hath commanded concerning *Jacob*, that his adversaries should be round about him; he hideth himself, and his wrath burneth like fire, the Lord hath covered the Daughter of *Zion* with a cloud in his anger, and cast down the beauty of Israel from Heaven unto Earth; *Zion* spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her. How shall we be silent when the Lord hath so great a Controversie with his People, and pleadeth with *Israel*, because he saith he is innocent and hath not sinned? Notwithstanding he hath gadded about to change his way, and hath followed the way of *Egypt* and of *Assyria*; And though the Lord hath rejected his confidences that he doth not prosper in them, yet will they not return again unto the Lord their God.

We desire sadly to Regrate these things, and that so many stumbling blocks are laid in the way of the Lords People. It doth also much afflict us that groundlesse prejudices and needlesse jealousies are so readily received and intertained, and so hardly removed, and

that many are ſo far from the meekneſſe and gentlenoſſe of Jeſus Chriſt, as alienation of mind and affections hath in a great measure gotten place; whereby it commeth to paſſe that clear and evident Truths concerning the Lords controverſie with the Land are not received in ſimplicity of heart, but are by many laid aſide as unworthy to be taken into conſideration: It is our hearts deſire that we may obtain mercy of the Lord, ſo to ſpeak unto, and walk with our Brethren as may be unto edification, and that we may do nothing which may either heighten or continue Differences in this Church, but every lawful way ſtudie to remove them. We have in that meaſure of ſinceritie which the Lord hath beſtowed on us endeavoured to approve our ſelves before him, in ſpeaking our Judgement to others with whom we have to do. And in the fear of God we are conſtrained in the bowels of love and compaſſion to ſpeak our thoughts alſo unto you, that ſo far as in us lyeth, we may in the Lords ſtrength yet further endeavour to prevent his departure from the Land, and that ſin and tranſgreſſion may be acknowledged and mourned for, that ſo the Lord may yet delight to dwell amongſt us.

For this end we conceive it a good and ready way, to look back where we were when theſe differences began, and whence theſe matters which have overflowed the Land have broken in upon us, and to repent and do our firſt works; the time was not long ſince, when all that feared the Lord in the Land were of one heart and one way, againſt adverſaries on either hand: and O that it were his good will and pleaſure to unite us again upon the ſame Principles, and for the ſame ends, in carrying on the Lords Work as heretofore! How graciouſly did the Lord countenance the purging forth of corrupt men in the Miniſtery in ſome places of the Land, and plentifully bleſt the Labours of theſe that were planted in their rowm? He poured water upon him that was thirſty and flouds on the dry ground, they ſprang up as among the Graſſe, as Willows by the water courſes; and it might have been ſaid, who are theſe that flee as a cloud, and as the Doves to their Windows? But now alas! How hath looſneſſe and prophanity got up the head in the Land? How is Piety mocked and ſhamed, yea even trampled upon, and endeavoured to be cruſhed ſo ſoon as it begins to break forth, even in the the tender bud? How doth the Work of Reformation ly behind, and the mourners in *Zion* look on the duſt and rubbiſh of the Lords Houſe with weeping eyes.

eyes, and bleeding hearts? How are the mountains of *Zion* laid waſt? how do the Foxes ſpoil the tender Grapes? and How is the Lords Vineyard become like unto the Vineyard of the ſluggard, through the negligence of unworthy Labourers, ſcandalous and inſufficient Miniſters and Elders who ought to have been long ſince caſt forth? How are the Sheep ſcattered and expoſed to Wolves by Idol-Shepheards, which feed themſelves and not their flocks, and have ſeen vain and fooliſh things, and have not diſcovered their iniquitie to turn away their captivity? neither have we it only to lament, that the work of purging the Lords Houſe is obſtructed, but that too many Miniſters in the Land repent of what hath been formerly done therein, and condemn it as a ſin, which before was avowed and highly commended as a moſt neceſſarie dutie, how great reaſon have we to tremble at the words of the Prophet *Ezekiel*, „She hath wearied „her ſelf with lies, and her great ſcum went not forth out of her; her „ſcum ſhall be in the fire, in thy filthineſſe is lewdneſſe, becauſe I „have purged thee and thou waſt not purged, thou ſhalt not be purged from thy filthineſſe any more, till I have cauſed my fury to reſt „upon thee: I the Lord have ſpoken it, it ſhall come to paſſe, and I „will do it, I will not goe back, neither will I ſpare, neither will I repent, according to thy wayes, and according to thy doings ſhall they „judge thee, ſaith the Lord God.

In *October* 1651. after ſeeking the Lords Face and humbling our ſelves before him, we did agree upon ſome courſes of the Lords dreadfull wrath which hath gone forth againſt the Land, and becauſe of the groſſe corruption and iniquitie abounding among Miniſters (In reference to which we fear that ſad charge of the Prophet *Malachi* may be applyed, „But ye are departed out of the way, ye have cauſed „many to ſtumble at the Law, ye have corrupted the Covenant of *Levi* ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, therefore have I alſo made you baſe and „contemptible before all the people, according as ye have not kept my „ways but have been partiall in the Law) we did therefore at the ſame time condeſcend upon ſome of the ſins of the Miniſtry, in both which, we are ſo far from pleading our own innoceney, that we do unfainedly deſire to acknowledge our acceſſion to be very great, and to be deeply humbled for the ſame before God. And we do earneſtly intreat in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt who came into the World to ſave ſinners, that you would ſeriouſly ponder the things that are therein repreſented.

preſented, without taking prejudice againſt them, becauſe they come from us, If the Lord ſhall be graciouſly pleaſed to put it into your hearts, with fervent Prayer and deep Humiliation, to conſider the Covenants and Engagement (which you and all of us have ſworn to the moſt High with uplifted hands) and to peruſe and ponder the many faithfull Warnings and Declarations of this Kirk in former times, anent the preſent Differences, and to call to minde the tentations which you met with, the ſnares which were laid in your way, the ſtraits which you were driven into, and all the motives and inducements which ingaged you in that way you are now upon, and to look upon the ſad Judgements which have come upon the Land ſince the firſt declining from the former way, we are hopefull that the Lord ſhall diſcover unto you the ſinfulneſſe of that Treaty in *Holland*, and of the Publick Reſolutions following thereupon; in particular, how greatly his Holy Name was abuſed in proſtituting the Ordinance of publick Repentance to the luſts and deſignes of corrupt men, by receiving the Malignant Party to the fellowſhip of all Church Ordinances, to make way for entruſting them as Captains and Rulers over the Lords People and his Intereſts, while they were notoriouſly walking in their accuſtomed prophaneneſſe and enimity to the Work of the Lord and to his People, and had not given evidences of Repentance; and who, as was then often foretold, have now again by their wicked deeds proclaimed to the World their Hypocriſie and diſſimulation; we would much rather deſire to hear that your ſelves did ſearch, then that we ſhould need to put you in minde what ſinfull courſes were taken to promote and eſtabliſh theſe Reſolutions, and what Cenſures have been impoſed upon Miniſters, and Acts made againſt Profeſſors for giving Teſtimony againſt the ſame; How gracious and well qualified Elders are removed and keeped out from Church Judicatories, and ignorant and prophane perſons brought in and moe endeavoured to be brought in to their rowm; How gifted and gracious young Men are debarred from entring into the Miniſtry, and a door is opened to others, whereof ſome are looſe and profane, and many are ignorant and ſtrangers to the Work of the Lord upon their own hearts. And here we cannot forget to deſire you ſeriouſly to conſider, how unwarrantably you did proceed in that Meeting at *Forfar* in *Auguſt* 1651. in the midſt of ſo many warnings and ſad diſpenſations from the Lord, even to that height and animoſity of

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ſpirit as to pronounce the heavy Curſe of God againſt all theſe that did withdraw their counſells from your Judicatories, and to ordain the ſame to be Read in every Congregation publickly on the Lords Day, and to ſpread Declarations at home, and ſend Printed Informations abroad into *England*, grievouſly traduceing your Brethren as Separatiſts, as Enemies to the Work of Reformation, and promoters of their deſignes who Invaded this Land, with many other reproaches of the like kind: Notwithſtanding you have had long experience of their faithfulneſſe in the Lords Work. Oh that you would lay theſe things to heart, and remember how greatly the Lord was thereby provocked, and his wrath increaſed, how ye have made the heart of the righteous ſad whom the Lord hath not made ſad, and ſtrengthned the hands of the wicked, that he ſhould not return from his wicked way, and how the Work of Reformation hath not only been interrupted thereby, but dangerouſly ſhaken, and a foundation laid for conjunction with all Parties whatſoever both at home and abroad, which hath been the cauſe and fountain of theſe ſad rents and diviſions that are among the Lords precious People: But of all things it is moſt grievous to us, that after all the evills and miſeries which the Lord hath brought upon this poor Land, you ſhould yet continue to juſtifie and maintain theſe things, and ſo tenaciouſly adhere unto them, which you would well examine from what principle the ſame doth flow. We know that it is commonly ſaid, that a ſatisfactory anſwer was returned to the Propoſitions delivered in by us to the late meeting at *Edinburgh*, in *July* laſt, but it is only a ſeeming ſatisfaction in ſome things by reaſon of the hidden way of expreſſion that is uſed in that anſwer, for the matter is ſo conveyed in words, as the two late Aſſemblies and their Acts (which comprehended all the things in queſtion betwixt us) are included in your ſpecious conceſſion; and ſo in effect, what ſeemeth to be granted there, is wholly overturned; to other things, no anſwer is returned; and, for theſe things which are laid down in that anſwer as uncontraverted betwixt us, we do not hear nor can we learn that they are begun to be practiſed by any of your number, though it be in the power of their hands, but the great benſill of the zeal of moſt part is turned againſt us: We may further ſay, that wayes of Peace and healing were ſo little ſtudied by the moſt part at that meeting in *July* laſt, as we fear the contrary was too much endeavoured,

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for not only Synods and Presbyteries were warranted and encouraged to proceed againſt Miniſters, Elders, and Expectants, according to the Acts made at *Dundee*, (which for the ſubſtance were renewed) but alſo Letters were written and Publiſhed in Print directed to the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Land whereby the Malignant Party was ſtirred up to exerciſe all the Power they had againſt us, which in ſome places they have not been ſlack to put in execution. We are much unſatisfied that advantages are ſought and taken againſt us in a very ungaining way (to ſay no worſe) not only to ſlight, miſconſtrue, and reject all our indeavours for healing the breach that is amongſt us; but likewiſe, in your Letters to Presbyteries, and other Papers you do miſrepreſent our proceedings. Beſide diverſe other ſtrange expreſſions in your late Letter, of the date the 25. *Febr.* laſt (wherein we hope you will not upon ſerious examination allow your ſelves) we do not a little wonder why it ſhould be ſaid that the conference for reconciliation and Union was altogether ſlighted and deſerted by us, when ſome of our number had carefully attended about three weeks for promotting the ſame, and were not at all adviſed with, nor ſo much as daigned with any Anſwer at all, untill after you had diſſolved your meeting; and when the Anſwer was given, it was in effect a refuſall of all our previous deſires, without ſatisfaction to which, you very well knew there could be no profite in conference: We are alſo greatly ſtumbled at the Faſts and Humiliations which you do appoint from time to time, the Cauſes are generall, and ambiguous expreſſions are uſed, which no doubt is a ſin before the Lord; if in any caſe ſurely in the confeſſion of ſin and tranſgreſſion, and humiliation for the ſame, we ought to ſtudie to be clear, plain, and diſtinct, and to avoid ambiguitie, neither fearing the power of men upon the one hand, nor deſiring to pleaſe the multitude upon the other, eſpecially after ſo much wrath from the LORD upon the Land: We know, and deſire to acknowledge that there was alwayes ſo much ſin and iniquity abounding in this Land as might have juſtly provocked the LORD to anger and indignation, but in the LORDS ordinary way of dealing with his People, we do finde that there have uſually been ſome publict ſinnes and breaches of Covenant preceeding ſuch ſad judgements which brought their other ſins to remembrance; you would not look upon it with a light eye, that ſo many of the Godly in the Land cannot away

away with, nor joyn in your Faſtings and Humiliations, and that all the wicked and groſly profain in the Land (who have alwayes hated and do ſtill hate the ordinances of GOD in their power and purity) do, with ſuch a furious carnall zeal, defend and maintain your Humiliations, and carefully attend ſuch diets and opportunities with delight and approbation, and yet do ſlight other occaſions (even with your ſelves) for worſhipping the Lord. We take no pleaſure to mention thoſe things, they are matter of lamentation unto us before the Lord: neither is it our purpoſe to render you odious, and, if our duty to God and unto you did not conſtrain us, we would much rather chooſe to be altogether ſilent in ſuch an evill time. It is from the love we bear in our hearts toward you, and the earneſt deſire we have to recover you from the ſnares into which you have fallen, and that ye may, through the Lords bleſſing upon you, become inſtrumentall for the good of *Zion*, in the day of her calamity and diſtreſſe: We do therefore exhort you, by the Lord Jeſus, to weigh theſe things in the Ballance of the Sanctuary, and to take with your ſin and guilt therein before the Lord, and to forſake that way of the Publike Reſolutions, as that which is greatly diſpleaſing to him, and to joine cordially with your Brethren in the former way we have been upon, for carrying on the Work of Reformation which was acceptable in the Lords ſight, and ſignally bleſſed in our hands from heaven: let it be far from you to put a hard conſtruction upon our intentions herein, or upon any of our words or expreſſions which may ſeem harſh; if we could have made choiſe of ſmoother words in ſuch a purpoſe, we would willingly have made uſe of them. We hope likewiſe that you will not offend at the freedome and plainneſſe which we have uſed with you, as being our Brethren, it is a great ſin in the Lords ſight to make a man an offender for a word, and to lay a ſnare for him that reproveth in the gate; But how excellent are the words of the ſweet *Pſalmiſt* of *Iſrael*! *Let the righteous ſmite me, it ſhall be a kindneſſe: and let him reprove me, it ſhall be an excellent oyl which ſhall not break my head.* If we would rent our hearts and turn unto the Lord our God, he is gracious and mercifull, ſlow to anger and of great kindneſſe, and repenteth of the evill, who knoweth but he will repent and leave a bleſſing behinde him, and ſhall yet again chooſe *Jeruſalem*, and dwell in the midſt of us? Surely he would rent the heavens and come down, that the

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mountains might flow down at his preſence, and make his Name known to his adverſaries, and ſhould ſay unto us, Fear not, O Land, be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will doe great things. Now he whom God hath exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto *Iſrael* and forgiveneſſe of ſins, fill you with the knowledge of his will in all wiſedome, and ſpirituall underſtanding: and the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you (and in us and in all his people) that which is well pleaſing in his ſight, through JESUS CHRIST: to whom be glory for ever, *Amen*.

We deſire you to communicate this to the Brethren that are of your judgement in theſe Differences.

Subſcribed in the name, and at the deſire of many Miniſters, Elders and Profeſſors of the Goſpel, met at Edinburgh *the* 17. *of* March, 1653.

By

Mr. ANDREW CANT.

The

The Asserters Answer.

Right Reverend,

WE received a Letter subscrived by You in the Name and at the desire of many Ministers, Elders, and Professors met at *Edinburgh*, which all along charges us, and those of our Judgement, with the guilt of many Land-destroying sins, and with obstinacy in them. This doth necessitate us, in order to our clearing unto those among whom that your Letter is spread, as also, least you take our silence for an evidence of our conviction, to give you this ensuing answer. We are very confident that ye who plead for so much charity at our hands, while ye are loading us with such a weight of unjust and odious imputations, will take it well from us, while we go about to clear our selves, and by force of Reasons to wipe off our Persons and Ministry that contempt and disgrace, which the matter of your Letter and your other Papers hath wrongously cast upon us. We could gladly have chosen to be as deaf men who hear not, and as dumb men who open not their mouth, if we alone and what concerneth us only did herein suffer; But for Zions sake we dar not hold our peace. The respect we owe to our Mother Church, and to the hitherto untainted reputation of many faithfull men, Ministers, Elders and others, all imbarked with us in the defence of one common Truth, forceth us to speak. Far be it from you to put an hard construction upon us, or upon any of our words and expressions, while we are giving a reason of our Faith and practice with meekness and fear, especially, being constrained to it by your selves.

We acknowledge with you the former mercies of God unto this Church, together with the astonishing terror of his present judgements: How good and how pleasant was it when Brethren dwelt together in Unity? it was like precious ointment, the dew of *Hermon*,

then the Lord commanded the bleſſing; Our Church then looked forth as the Morning, fair as the Moon, clear as the Sun, and terrible as an Armie with Banners; How excellent were the fruits of Church government when inferiour Judicatories and perſons of all ranks, Miniſters and others did move each in their own place, in their due ſubordination preſcribed unto them by the Lord Chriſt? When publict warnings concerning dangers and duties did come from the Watch-tower of Supream Judicatories, and from thence as from *Aarons* head, did run down by his beard to the uttermoſt skirts of his garments, were we not then for a name of praiſe amongſt the Churches abroad, and the rod of Diſcipline in our hand, a terror to every thing which exalted it ſelf againſt truth and pietie at home? Then did the work of Reformation come on apace, untill the head-ſtone was ready to be put upon it, with ſhoutings crying Grace, Grace unto it; The Vine brought out of *Egypt* planted amongſt us did fill the land, the hills were covered with the ſhadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly Cedars, She ſent forth her boughs unto the ſea, and her branches unto the river. But now alas! the caſe is altered, we are as members diſjointed, as an Army routed, the Authority of CHRISTS Courts weakened, and all this is the more terrible, that our own hand hath been in the tranſgreſſion, our hedges are broken down, ſo that all they that paſſe by do robe and ſpoile; the Boar out of the wood doth waſte, and the wilde beaſt out of the Forreſt doth devour, the Foxes and little Foxes do ſpoile the Vines with tender grapes, and there is none to take hold of them.

We do alſo regrate with you that groundleſſe prejudices, and needleſſe jealouſies are ſo readily received and intertained, and ſo hardly removed, and that alienation of minde and affection doth ſo much increaſe. Thoſe ſeems to be the latter times indeed, concerning which it is foretold, that becauſe iniquity ſhall abound, the love of many ſhall waxe cold. Only it appeareth from what followeth in yours, that what guilt is herein ye intend to faſten it all upon us, and to purge your ſelves wholly of it. Thus we take up your meaning, and doubtleſſe others will do ſoalſo, while ye adde that, *Hereby it commeth to paſſe, that clear and evident Truths concerning the Lords controverſie with the Land are not received in ſimplicity of heart, but are by many laid aſide as unworthy to be taken notice of*, a thing

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which thoſe of your judgement do uſually charge us with. But for your ſelves, ye profeſſe it is your hearts deſire ſo to walk with your Brethren as may be unto edification, and that ye may do nothing which may heighten the difference. Thus all thoſe forenamed evills muſt be faſtened upon us: To all which we return this Anſwer. 1. As we conceive, ye neither will, nor yet can poſitively clear your ſelves from having your own ſhare in thoſe things as well as others. Surely ye do not really think that there is no groundleſſe prejudices nor needleſſe jealouſies received and entertained by thoſe of your Judgement, nor no place given to alienation of mind and affection; and if ſo, we wonder much why then do ye ſo regrate theſe evills, as it is evident ye would faſten them wholly upon us: How is it, that ye who preſſe ſo much taking with guilt upon others, do not freely own your own ſhare in this common and uncontroverted guiltineſſe? 2. We do not purge thoſe of our Judgement, but as uſually falls out in Church diviſions, ſo it is poſſible, way is given by many to prejudices and jealouſies; but we are ſorry we have reaſon to ſay, your way doth free them from the imputation of being altogether groundleſſe. We can hardly conceive, but if ye ſeriouſly conſider, ye your ſelves will judge, that there is great ground of jealouſie given to theſe of our Judgement from ſeverall things in your carriage: As namely, for your crying out ſo much againſt that which we conceive to have been our duty, as the main Cauſe of Gods Judgement, and Kingdome-ruining ſin; from your aſſerting in Print to the World that we are, for the ſame very thing, men ſcandalous, and unworthy to ſit in a General Aſſemblie: If ye ſpeak this much, when for number ye are comparatively ſo few and deſtitute of all power, what can be expected your Principles will lead you unto, if once ye had that fulneſſe of power which ye aime at? 3. How groundleſſe ſo ever our jealouſies be, we muſt crave leave to clear our ſelves of that unchriſtian effect which ye have expreſly affirmed to have followed upon them. The ſearcher of hearts knows, no groundleſſe prejudices, nor alienation of mind and affections, hath ſo prevailed with us as to reject clear and evident Truths concerning the Lords Controverſie with the Land, as unworthy to be taken notice of. We deſire to believe that the fear and dread of the Almighty ſhall never ſo far forſake us. But 4. what ye mean by theſe clear and evident truths concerning the Lords controverſie, and rejected by us, we cannot well conjecture;

We can hardly think that ye mean the poynts of controverſie under debate betwixt you and us; ye know what ye hold in thoſe are not clear and evident truths unto us, and we believe unto none of the Forraign Churches: We deſire to know if ever ſuch Tenets were vented for Truths in any part of the Chriſtian World, as that it is not lawfull, for the lawfull Magiſtrate to imploy the Body of his Subjects for the Lands defence againſt an unjuſt Invaſion; or that we may not be concurring, according to our Place, unto the inveſting of any, with the power of Magiſtracie, what ever otherwiſe be his right unto it, untill he give convincing ſignes of a reall change; or that it is unlawfull to join in Camp fellowſhip with theſe whom we may have even the neareſt Church fellowſhip with: Such and many ſuch like are no clear and evident Truths unto us. But if ye mean other Truths concerning the common and uncontroverted guiltineſſe of all ranks of Perſons within the Land, ſuch as Contempt of the Goſpel, Pride, Oppreſſion, Uncleanneſſe, Deſpiſing of Ordinances, Self-ſeeking under publick pretences, ye know we do receive ſuch Truths, and ſtirre up the Land to mourn for them, though we know many who looks on thoſe, as ſins not to be taken notice of in a Publick Faſt, except thoſe other things under debate, and of leſſer moment, what ever truth be in them, be acknowledged alſo.

Ye Profeſſe your ſcope in Writing unto us, is that ſin and tranſgreſſion may be acknowledged by us; ye needed not have excuſed your attempting of this towards us, by your doing the like unto others. We are glad indeed how freely ye do acquit your ſelves according to your Vocation unto all men, and are confident when what ye have done unto others of this kind, ſhall be made as publick as this to us hath been a long time ſince, it will ſpeak for it ſelf: But what ever ye have done or not done unto others, your Writing unto us had been moſt acceptable, if ſo it had taught us what we know not; your ſmiting of us ſhould have been a kindneſſe.

For attaining the end by you Propoſed, ye conceive it a good and ready way to look back where we were when theſe differences began, particularly ye mention our bypaſt work of purging corrupt men from the Miniſtery, and the profitable fruits thereof, together with the ſad effects hath followed upon the interuption of it, by the abounding of ſcandalous Miniſters and Elders, which ye lament ſo much the more, as that what hath been already done of this kind is condemned by many.

by many. In anſwer to which we wiſh indeed we may all look back where we were when theſe differences began. Our Generall Aſſemblies were then terrible as ane Armie with Banners, inferiour Judicatories and Perſons of all ranks walking in their due ſubordination unto thoſe, whereby the weeds and ſtones of all ſorts were gathered out of the Lords Vineyard, which now almoſt every where abound. 2. We grant, that the Houſe of God ought to be purged, and that not only from men of ſcandalous lives, but alſo of dangerous and erroneous principles; but we are ſorry that ye labour ſo much to faſten upon us the hindering of this ſo good a Work, ye know the weakning of our Authority makes purging Work for the time but very little uſefull; Men are now taught, and ye know by whoſe example, to ſubmit no further to Church Cenſures nor what ſeemeth good unto themſelves. Our purging work muſt have Union going before it, or elſe it is to little purpoſe, ſo that theſe who have begun and continued our wofull Rent moſt, are greateſt retarders of this neceſſary work, and ſo deepeſt in that guilt, which you ſo much at all occaſions do charge upon us. 3. We know not who thoſe are who repents of the bypaſt work of purging, poſſibely ſome conceive an inconvenience and danger to continue it in the ſame way wherein it was formerly uſed, but for what we know, there is none of our judgement againſt the thing it ſelf. It may prove hazardous indeed to give unto a *Quorum* of ſome few men (moſt of them being very young inexperienced and unacquainted with our Diſcipline) a conſtant power renued from time to time to ſit down upon whole Synods and Presbyteries, and caſt out and hold in whom they pleaſe, eſpecially at this time when through our wofull Rent there is ſo much mutuall irritation of ſpirit, and as your ſelves grant ſo many groundleſſe prejudices, and needleſſe jealouſies, together with ſo much alienation of affections. We are very confident it ſhall not be made appear, that *Ezekiel* threatneth the neglecting of purging only by ſuch a meane as this, ſo, with all reſpect to your Wiſdome and parts, ye might, as we conceive, have omitted the citation of that place as to this purpoſe.

As for your two Papers mentioned in yours, as containing the cauſes of GODS dreadfull wrath, and the ſins of the Miniſtry, which ye recommend unto us, we have not, as yet, ſo acurately peruſed them, but from the generall view we have taken, we finde what is the great work of theſe books, to wit, to convince us of the ſinfulneſſe

neſſe of the Treaty, publict Reſolutions &c. And in order to our conviction herein ye recommend to us the peruſall of the Covenant, Engagement, Remonſtrances, Declarations of this Kirk; For Anſwer, We have peruſed many of them all, and moſt of all, the Word of Truth (the peruſall whereof, why it is not recommended by you, at leaſt among the reſt, we wonder much) But we cannot finde from all or any of theſe that ſinfulneſſe in theſe things which ye charge them with. We finde the Treaty with the King approven by Covenant, Remonſtrances, Declarations, ſo that if ye had cited but one paſſage of any of theſe ſeemingly againſt it, we ſhould have cited ten really for it. We finde the publict Reſolutions alſo approven by theſe: to wit, The Commiſſions Anſwer to the Quæries proponed to them by the Committee of Eſtates; ſome of which Anſwers in theſe, is. 1. It is lawfull for a Magiſtrate to imploy the body of his Subjects for the Lands defence, eſpecially providing none of them be put to ſuch Truſt as may be prejudiciall to the work of God, which ye know was expreſly provided for in the Commiſſions Anſwer. 2. That a Parliament may take off civill mulcts, alter or ſhorten dyets for admitting unto, or debarring from Truſt, providing they actually imploy none but theſe who are of known good affection to the Cauſe of God. Theſe are the publick Reſolutions ſo much cryed out againſt, and theſe wee darre not condemne, except vvee vvould depart from the Word of Truth. We findē alſo what the Commiſſion did in receiving of Malignants to give Eccleſiaſtick ſignes of Repentance, to be juſtified by the Acts of preceeding Aſſemblies, eſpecially the Aſſemblie 1649. where many of your judgement did ſit as Members. We finde that Aſſembly did injoin the Commiſſion to proceſſe theſe who were upon the unlawfull Engagement, even to Excommunication, if they did not offer ſignes of Repentance: We find the Commiſſion 1650. walking by the ſame ſteps, in their receiving of them to the Communion of the Church, which the ſame Aſſembly in the ſame place doth preſcribe, and if they failed in one circumſtance, why do ye not make it known. So that while ye ſay that they were notoriouſly walking in their accuſtomed prophaneneſſe and enimity unto the Work of God, even when the Commiſſion did receive them, is more then can be made good; we mean, that they were ſo walking

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notoriouſly unto the Judicatory who received them, and ye know Church Judicatories are to judge only according unto what is made notour unto them. If ye ſay their walking ſo was notour unto others, then we ask why did not thoſe others follow Chriſts rule with them? Was there any of the whole bulk, whom any of you did admoniſh, and for their pertinacy delated them unto the Church, as the Word of God and the Generall Aſſembly did excite all to do. This ye know ought to have been firſt done, before ye had thus charged CHRISTS Court with proſtituting the Ordinances of Repentance unto the luſts of corrupt men.

That ſeverall of theſe, whom the Commiſſion did then receive, have ſince proclaimed their diſſimulation, reflecteth nothing upon us, no more then the carriage of diverſe of your Judgment, who have tread in the ſame ſteps with them of late, doth reflect upon you. Beſides this, we may ſay that the greater part of thoſe, at whoſe receiving ye profeſſed your ſelves moſt ſtumbled, have given as great a proof of their ſincerity, by their after actings and ſufferings for the Covenant and Cauſe, as any others have done ſince that time.

Ye proceed and wiſh our ſelves may ſearch what ſinfull courſes have been taken to promove theſe Publike Reſolutions: but leaſt we ſhould not ſearch, or happily, after ſearching, not find, ye put us in mind of ſeverall particulars, to which we give this return:

1. If any Cenſures have been impoſed upon Miniſters, without a preceeding Act and practiſe of our Kirk in ſuch like caſes, then let the Impoſers bear the blame.

2. For any particular Acts made by the Aſſembly at *Dundee* againſt Profeſſors, for their oppoſition to the Acts thereof, they not being particularly inſtanced, we cannot ſpeak particularly to them; But, compare who will, we are very confident the moſt rigorous Acts of that Aſſembly will be juſtified by the many practiſes of former Aſſemblies in the like caſes.

3. That ignorant, profane Elders are brought in upon Church Judicatories; is beyond our knowledge, neither do we juſtifie any who ſo doth, if any ſuch be; But ſure we are, do it who will, they have no warrand for, nor encouragement to it from any of the late Aſſemblies: the latter whereof expreſly Ordaineth that none ſhall be admitted to that Office, but ſuch as ſhall be well reported of, triall alſo being firſt taken of their abilities.

4. Ye mention that gracious and well qualified Elders are removed and kept out from Church Judicatories, and gifted and gracious men debarred from entring the Miniſtery, and a door opened to others, looſe and profane, *&c.* We know the ground of your challenge is the Act of the late Aſſembly, about Ruling Elders and Expectants: concerning which we anſwer, 1. That thoſe who are for the Aſſembly have been ſo far from the rigide executing of that Act, that in any Synods and Presbyteries, chiefly where theſe of our judgement have power, where there hath been one Elder adhering to the Proteſtation removed from Church Judicatories, there hath been twentie of theſe who are for the Aſſembly, and that for no reaſon we have heard of (few or none being legally proceſſed) except for their judgement in the preſent controverſie; And the ground why we thus ſpeak is this, the ſame Elders have ſitten in our Seſſions thir many years bypaſt without any endeavour to have them changed during thir wofull differences; And for Expectants, where one of our judgement hath entred the Miniſtrie, we mean in any place where we have power, a door hath been opened to three of yours. We ſhall not inſiſt here to complain, though there be more nor reaſon, that by the unwearied activity of ſome, the credit and reputation of diverſe gracious young men is much blaſted, and their names traduced, ſo that many other wayes, willing, gracious and able, are greatly diſcouraged from aiming at the Miniſtrie, ſeeing nothing as the times now are, but certain ruine and diſgrace, if over the belly of their light they do not profeſſe an alteration of their judgement. 2. As to the Act it ſelf, we have this to ſay for it, it is not the firſt which hath been made of that kind, ye know what Acts were made againſt Miniſters, Expectants and Elders, who did not acknowledge the Aſſembly at *Glaſgow*; And how ever, the not acknowledging of that Aſſembly was a thing ſinfull, yet none will call it ſuch a ſin, but gracious men through error, tentations, or preingagements might have fallen in it; Will ye therefore call theſe Acts a debarring of gracious Elders and Expectants from the Miniſtrie, we conceive ye will not.

5. As to the buſineſſe of *Forfar*; When the Invaders had overrun and poſſeſt both ſides of Forth, the beſt part of this Land, and were now ready to paſſe Tay, lye down before *Dundee*, and overrun the Shires be North Tay, the People then being exceedingly diſcouraged

raged with fear, and divided in factions; The Commiſſion not out of hight and animoſity of Spirit (whereof they are uncharitably challenged) but out of the ſenſe of danger and conſcience of the Truſt committed to them, conceived it their neceſſary duty at ſuch a time, to incite the People there to unanimous concurrence and conjunction in Counſell and Forces for the defence of the remnant of the poor Kingdome, and to lay out the fearfulneſſe of the ſin of withdrawing from theſe duties, and the judgements threatned in Gods Word againſt the ſame. This was not to pronounce a curſe againſt any, but to rouze up all unto the acting of duty for preventing the curſe, which God himſelf hath denunced againſt ſuch as come not forth *to help the Lord againſt the Mighty*, and hath been practiſed by former Generall Aſſemblies and Commiſſions in exigencies that were not ſo extreme. *Sol. Warn. February* 1645. *pag.* 15. and 18. When you have conſidered this and informed your ſelf better in the matter, we hope you will find their Warning was ſeaſonable and neceſſary even under theſe ſad diſpenſations; and none in our opinion can juſtly think other wayes, except ſuch as think that after theſe diſpenſations, men ſhould have willingly yeelded up themſelves, the Cauſe, the Kingdom, and all their Intereſts to the Invaders.

6. For that you alledge of our grievous traducing and reproaching you by our ſpreading Declarations in this Land, and Printing Informations for *England*, we doubt theſe Declarations and Informations you mean were ſpread or Printed; Sure we are, there were no calumnies nor reproaches in them againſt any Perſons, but a faithfull relation of Truth in matters of fact, and a clearing of the integrity and lawfulneſſe of our proceedings againſt your calumnies and aſperſions; But if ye could have inſtanced and inſtructed any particular in theſe Papers, wherein ye were ſo traduced, it would have had the more weight, and untill then, indifferent men will think you guilty for your ſo charging us of the ſame fault which ye charge us with. Eſpecially ſeeing, 2. Its known whoſe Papers had moſt ready acceſſe to the Preſſe then, and yet have. And 3. Conſidering what ye avowedly charge us with, to be carriers on of a courſe of backſliding, and by doing our duty to have drawn down the wrath of God upon the Land, and by our obſtinacie therein to continue the ſame; Which in our eſtimation, is as unjuſt a reproach, as if ye had been charged with all that which ye do affirme. 4. If we intended to recriminate,

we might ſpeak much more of propagating opinions by informations if not miſ-informations upon your ſide, than for any thing we know ye can make good upon ours.

7. That the Work of Reformation hath been ſhaken, a foundation laid for conjunction with all parties, and that the preſent Diviſions have proceeded from our forementioned actings otherwayes then as from an harmeleſſe occaſion, is as eaſily denyed by us, as affirmed by you.

But in the next place ye do profeſſe it to be very grievous that wee do yet adhere to our former Judgement, and wiſh us to examine from what Principle it doth flow; We have obeyed your deſire, and ſhall here give you an account what after examination we have found to be the Principle from whence our adhering to theſe Truths in controverſie betwixt you and us do flow. God is our witneſſe, that according to the meaſure of Grace received, we have laboured to lay aſide preingagements, reſpect to credit with men, and to judge ſo far as our infirmity would ſuffer of the things conſidered abſtractly, and in themſelves, and after pondering of what might be ſaid on both hands, we are more and more confirmed, that theſe things we adhere unto, are Scripture Truths, conſonant to the Doctrine of our Church, and never ſo much for ought we know, as once queſtioned in any part of the Chriſtian World: And we do not doubt, but there are many able men in this Church, who will maintain the beauty, neceſſity, and uſefulneſſe of theſe Truths, againſt all the reproaches they are aſperſed with. Believe us, it is from this Principle that we adhere unto thoſe ſo much contradicted and reproached Truths.

Ye complain of ſeverall things in our late Aſſemblie at *Edinburgh*; 1. That they did not give you a ſatisfactory anſwer, and that becauſe in their ſpecious conceſſions was included the approbation of the two late Aſſemblies and of their Acts; To which we Anſwer, we believe ye will not affirme that the Aſſemblie did require an Approbation from you, either unto Aſſembly or Acts: And will not this think ye, be thought reaſonable ſatisfaction by indifferent Judges, that nothing was required of you, which did neceſſarily infer the alteration of your Judgement. But it ſeemeth no thing will ſatisfie ſome, ſo long as we do approve of theſe Aſſemblies, and do not alter our Judgement in relation to the maine things in controverſie; And if ſo, we apprehend ſuch ſhall not receive a ſatisfactory anſwer in haſte

haſte. 2. Ye complain that things laid down by the Aſſemblie as uncontroverted amongſt us, are not yet practiſed by any of our number, what theſe things are ſhould have been inſtanced, and if we could, we ſhould have given an anſwer. 3. Ye profeſſe your fear that the moſt part of that Aſſembly did endeavour to marre Peace and wayes of healing, Becauſe 1. Synods and Presbyteries were encouraged to go on againſt Miniſters and others according to the Acts of *Dundee*. 2. Becauſe of the Act ſent to Noble-men, Gentle-men, and all pious Perſons within the Land, whereby the Malignant Party was ſtirred up to exerciſe their whole power againſt you, and this ye hold forth as the native ſcope of that Letter, not as the naked event only; for that is after mentioned while ye adde that in ſome places the Malignant Party hath not been ſlack to Act accordingly. To which we Anſwer, what was the intentions of any or moſt part of that Aſſembly in relation to Peace we cannot infallibly determine; but if we may judge of intentions by actions, we conceive they have endeavoured Peace more than ye would make the World believe: For the thing required by them from you in the Overture of Peace, is not that ye ſhould alter your Judgement either in the matter of Publick Reſolutions, or yet concerning the Authority of the Aſſembly. Only becauſe the holding up of Debates did tend to increaſe the fire of ſtrife: It was required that thoſe unneceſſar and unbrotherly Conteſts, ſhould be laid aſide; And becauſe a ſtanding Proteſtation would prove afterwards inevitably the ſeed of new contention and ſtrife, it was required in like manner, that ye ſhould paſſe from your Proteſtations alſo; Both which as we conceive, ye might have done, reſerving your Judgement concerning the ſinfulneſſe of the reſolutions, and Nullity of the Aſſembly, except ye affirme, that the publick venting of any thing which we conceive to be Truth may not be forborn, no not for the Churches Peace, or that none can eſteem an Aſſembly Null, except they appear in a publick Proteſtation againſt it, none of which as we conceive ye will aſſert for Truth. Now this being all which was required, let any judge if this was not a comming up a good length towards Peace upon the Aſſemblies part, eſpecially if it be compared with what ye have ſince made publick in your Printed Papers, tending as we conceive to make Peace and Union deſperate. *viz.* The juſtifying of the ſecond reaſon of the Proteſtation, given in at St. *Andrews*, wherein is

aſſerted that theſe who have been Active for carrying on the Publick Reſolutions are Men Scandalous, and ſo not to be admitted to voice in a Generall Aſſembly; together with what ye hold out in your fyft Reaſon againſt chooſing Commiſſioners to the late Aſſembly at *Edinburgh*: That it is unlawfull to joine in an Aſſembly, made up for the moſt part of thoſe who acted in, and approved of the late Aſſembly at *Dundee*; Of which ſort, are without all controverſie the Body of Miniſters and Elders within this Church: from which grounds, we cannot ſee any probable way for Peace, except the Body of the Miniſters and Elders do willingly lye by at your meer deſire; ſuffering you to erect your ſelves in an Aſſembly, and then to attend with patience the Authoritative reſult from your already known principles, whereby all of us are judged men highly ſcandalous, guilty of foul defection, and Church-ruining ſins, together with an high degree of pertinacie in them againſt, ſo many teſtimonies, ſuch clear and evident light, and in the midſt of ſo many fearfull judgements. Now let indifferent men judge who requireth moſt of others, and whoſe principles are moſt obſtructive to peace. 2. That the moſt part of the Generall Aſſembly did encowrage Synods and Presbyteries, to go on with Cenſures againſt Miniſters and Elders, it is hardly probable; conſidering that not one Miniſter hath been hitherto ſo much as proceſſed for any thing relating to differences; and if the benſall of their zeal was ſo much towards cenſure then; ye would ſhow what hath interveened to blunt the edge of their zeal ſo much ſince. 3. That ſuch an outcry ſhould be made againſt the Aſſemblies Letter to Noblemen, *&c.* as bewraying unpeaceable ſpirits, we cannot imagine the Reaſon: ſure we are, they are known to be men very peaceable, in whoſe breaſts the motion of ſending ſuch a Letter did firſt bread: And for the matter of it, we are confident, indifferent Judges will approve of it as ſavouring much of Peace; The ſum whereof was to ſhew what length the Aſſembly had come towards Peace, in the Overture of Peace therewith ſent, and to entreat them to deal with you to embrace the ſamine. And, 4. We wonder moſt by what Art ye can make it appear, that the native ſcope of that Letter was to ſtir up the Malignant Party to exerciſe all their power againſt you. Was the Letter direct unto any, but unto Noblemen, Gentlemen, and all pious Perſons within the Land? We cannot conceive thoſe to be

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the Malignant Party ye do ſo much ſpeak of: Or is there the leaſt hint in that Letter exciting to exerciſe any power againſt you further then exhortations, perſwaſions, deſires, and entreaties? What then, is there in that Letter which ye can load juſtly with ſuch an invidious ſenſe? If we were going about, as the manner of ſome is, to charge you with being guilty of the Kingdoms ruine, and were turning over all your opinions and practiſes, whereby ye differ from us into cauſes of Gods wrath, ſtirring up the People of the Land to mourn for the ſame, denouncing you guilty of high pertinacie for your maintaining of them, and prophecying the continuance and increaſe of wrath, untill thoſe were acknowledged and taken with: If our way were ſuch, ye might juſtly challenge us indeed, for ſtirring up not only the Malignant Party to exerciſe their power againſt you, but alſo for making your own people abhorre you, and truly though we were aiming at your ſhame and diſgrace, we could hardly imagine a more compendious way, for bringing of it about, but the uprightneſſe of the upright will preſerve him.

Laſtly, ye profeſſe your diſſatisfaction with the preſent Commiſſion, and that for ſeverall things. 1. For their ſlighting and miſconſtruing all your endeavours for Peace. 2. For miſrepreſenting your proceedings to Presbyteries, particularly in their Letter of the Date *Febr.* 25. To which we Anſwer, 1. The Commiſſion did appoint a Conference at St. *Andrews*, in order to Union and Peace, which was the grant of your deſire for the maine, and if ſome words expreſſing their appointment, did make you ſlight the offer, it would appear ye have not had mind to the thing it ſelf. 2. That the Commiſſion did miſrepreſent your proceedings is more then can be proved, as to the paſſage of their Letter pitched upon, we anſwer, 1. If the Conference appointed by the Commiſſion was not ſlighted by you, then whoſe default was it that it was not keeped? 2. That thoſe of your number was not adviſed with, in drawing up of the Commiſſions Anſwer, will not be thought ſtrange unto thoſe who know ye adviſed with none of our Judgement when ye did draw up your demand, though there was ſeveralls preſent, mediating with you for Peace. 3. That ſome at leaſt of your previous deſires were refuſed by the Commiſſion, will be thought as little ſtrange unto thoſe who knew what ye did deſire, *viz.* that the Commiſſion ſhould uncommiſſionat themſelves by a Publick Declaration, that they ſhould Act nothing as a

Commiſſion,

Commission, during the Conference, though the necessity of the Church should never so much require it. And how could we (ye alledge imagine, that the refusing of this desire would marre the good of the Conference, except we had first imagined that your proponing of such a previous desire, did argue that ye intended no good at all in order to the Churches Peace, should be reaped by the Conference. Lastly, ye professe your selves greatly stumbled at the Fasts and Humiliations appointed by the Commission from time to time, and that because the Causes thereof are General and ambiguous. For Answer, 1. If we were to shew unto you all wherewith we are dissatisfied in your way, we conceive we have greater reason to be dissatisfied with your selves, but our intent being mainly herein to clear our selves, we shal only Propone this Question, If ever ye read in any Church Story, in any age of the Church, that when difference of Judgement did fall out among Prime and Eminent Church-members, that ever the one Party being the fewer, and no Church Judicatorie, did take upon them to turn over the one side of the Controversie into Causes of Gods Wrath upon the Church, and by the Sole Authority of Church Sessions, hold them forth to Congregations to be mourned for at Solemn Fasts, and this all before the Rent did turn remediless, yea and while the same Party is pretending unto Peace, and charging the other with slighting all Overtures for Union and healing so often Propounded, and so much pursued by themselves. 2. If ye had instanced any of these Causes of our late Fasts, which are either ambiguous or generall, we should have answered; But sure we are, it is an unjust charge: no Causes can be more clear, nor needeth to be more particular nor the Causes of the very last Fast are, as is obvious unto any who without prejudice will peruse them. But we gather from that which followeth in yours, what it is ye misse most in these Causes, *viz.* That we do not acknowledge a Land-destroying guiltinesse in the Publike Resolutions. It seemeth unto us, ye hint at this, while ye say, ye do finde in Gods ordinary way of dealing with his People, that there hath usually been some publick sins and breaches of Covenant preceeding such sad judgements. For Answer: 1. We are deceived if we have not found the contrary, *Psal.* 44. The People of God are put unto shame, given as sheep appointed for meat, scattered among the heathen, they were broken in the places of Dragons, their bellies made to

cleave

cleave unto the duſt, and yet *verſ.* 17. for all this, they had not forgotten God, nor yet deale falſely in his Covenant. Ye know alſo, what ſad judgements were brought upon the whole Catholick Church viſible in the time of the firſt Perſecutions by the heathen Emperors, and afterwards by the Arrians, and yet there is nothing extant of any publicke break of Covenant; going before thoſe terrible ſtroaks and ſad ſufferings. But 2. Granting that ſome breaches of Covenant had gone before our ſad ſtroake, muſt it therefore follow that thoſe were the Publick Reſolutions: May there not be found other breaches in relation to thoſe who are our Rod, or ſome other things. But 3. Though ye were perſwaded that the breach is in theſe, yet do ye think it indeed a ſin before the Lord for us, who are not ſo perſwaded, to mourn for other Land-deſtroying ſins which are upon all hands uncontroverted? May not *Joſhua* and the Elders mourn for their ſtroak and their known ſinnes procuring it, though yet they knew nothing of *Achan*, who had procured Gods Wrath againſt them moſt. Or did *Job* ſin while he acknowledged his known iniquity? *Job* 7. 21. Although he himſelf apprehended there was ſome further prime cauſe of this ſtroak nor any thing he had yet ſeen, as appears from *Job* 10. 2. *Shew me wherefore thou contendeſt with me.* But laſtly as to this purpoſe ye adde, that we would not look upon it with a light eye, that ſo many Godly in the Land cannot join in our faſts, and that all the wicked and prophane in the Land do carefully attend ſuch dyets. For Anſwer, 1. We know there are both Godly and prophane within the Church, but for our ſelves, we never liked the making uſe of that diſtinction for ſtrengthning of intereſt and faction, by ranking all the prophane and wicked upon the one ſide, and ſo none but the Godly, yea, and the generality of the Godly, upon the other. We know ſuch a method hath been followed by ſome, but the vanity of it hath ſtill at laſt been diſcovered, how long it will hold up with you, we do not know. 2. Though we are not able from our own exact knowledge to order Profeſſors through the whole Land in their ſeverall ranks, yet our information faileth us, if the generality of noted profeſſors of any old ſtanding do not join with us in our Faſts and Humiliations. 3. That any doth not joyn with us is not looked on with a light eye by us, we profeſſe we look ſadly upon it, as a piece of that ſpirit ſtirring in the times. The intent whereof is to make profeſſors firſt lightly to ſcruple, and then to ſe-

paratew ithout any reaſon, upon meer gainſtanding of minde; firſt from ſome Ordinances in the hands only of ſome, and next in the hands of others, that ſo in progreſſe of time they may caſt at all Ordinances. We do verily believe ſo much is not intended by them, but ſo far as we can judge, the Spirit ſtirring in the times driveth at no leſſe, and this is a thing which neither we nor ye ought to think lightly of, farre leſſe do any thing by Word or Writ which may ſtrengthen peoples hands, or encourage them in ſuch a way. 4. Ye miſtake while ye affirme all the prophane in the Land do join with us; We know in ſome places that ſeveralls of the moſt prophane have ſeparated from us, and gone to hear ſome of your Judgement at thoſe dyers, and that only becauſe they conceived ſuch a way would be acceptable to ſome whom they have dependance upon: If ye knew the men, we conceive ye would not think us uncharitable, though we ſaid it was nothing of conſcience which moved them. 5. Though many prophane men ſhould joyn in our Faſts (as they uſually did in years by-paſt countenance all ſuch Faſts as were appointed by Publick Judicatories) yet there is no reproach to us, nor the way of *God* which we maintain (the contrary to which ye ſeeme to inſinuate) ye know by whom the ſame hath been objected as a matter of reproach againſt the Presbyterian way, and how ye your ſelves have often anſwered it.

That the riſe of your Writing is from love to us, and not from a purpoſe to render us odious, we ſhall not Queſtion, only we ſtumble much that doubles of yours were ſpread unto others before it came to our hands: what hath been the purpoſe of thoſe who did ſo we cannot well imagine. As for the matter of your exhortation, that we ſhould quite the Publick Reſolutions, ye have our Anſwer to it in what is already Written: Only your method ſtumbleth us not a little, that the quyting of our Judgement in thoſe is required as previous to our joyning with you, if ye hold this as neceſſarily previous to our Union we deſire to know; ſurely if ſo, ye are not ſo cordiall for Union as ſome of you pretend.

And now ſince we have ſpoken our heart freely unto you in anſwer to yours, wherein we preſume ye will finde that we have obeyed at leaſt your laſt deſire, having Written nothing which may evidence our putting of a hard conſtruction upon your intentions, or upon any of your words or expreſſions, which may ſeem harſh, we have only anſwered to the matter held forth by them; we ſhal not take upon us,

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to ſpeak in defenſe of that way wherein ye have walked this time bypaſt, the Generall Aſſemblie having ſpoken ſo much to that purpoſe, whom if ye do not hear, we conceive neither will ye hear us. Only Sir, let us with all due reſpect take the boldneſſe to propound unto you ſome few Queſtions concerning ſome things in your way, and the way of thoſe other Reverend Brethren who join with you: To which we earneſtly crave, and, as we conceive, in equity may expect an Anſwer. The things we queſtion being ſuch as your clear and diſtinct anſwer will ſatisfie the minds of many, much concerning the ſincerity of your endeavour for healing, and your willingneſſe to remove theſe things, which in the apprehenſions of many are reall impediments and ſtumbling blocks, caſt in the way of Union and Peace. The Queſtions are thoſe following.

QUEST. 1. Do ye indeed conceive that ye can have no Union with us untill we obey the contents of your Letter, and profeſſe an alteration of our Judgement in theſe things wherein we differ from you? Beſides other things, the exhortation proponed in your Letter unto us giveth us ground thus to Queſtion, where our forſaking of the way of Publick Reſolutions is required as previous unto our joining together for carrying on the Work of Reformation: If ye ſo conceive we are at a poynt, we muſt either come over the belly of our Light, and call good evill, elſe ye will not hear of Peace.

QUEST. 2. If ye look on us as men ſcandalous and unworthy to ſit in Church Judicatories? the ſecond Reaſon of your Proteſtation againſt the Aſſembly at S. *Andrews* gives us ground to imagine thus: for there do ye decline that Aſſembly, becauſe the moſt eminent men of our Church was not caſten by as ſcandalous, though nothing either was or could be alledged againſt them, but their acceſſion to the Publike Reſolutions; If ye ſo judge ſtill, we cannot underſtand how ye minde peace.

QUEST. 3. Do ye really think it unlawfull to joine in an Aſſembly made up for the moſt part of theſe who acted in, and approved of the late Aſſembly at *Dundee*, as your fift Reaſon againſt chooſing Commiſſioners to the late Aſſembly at *Edinburgh* doth expreſſe? If thus ye judge, then you muſt decline not only the Generall Aſſemblies, but all Synods and Preſbyteries: yea, and ſhake off your Miniſters alſo, if they be not of your judgement, as continuing in a courſe which you think defection and the main cauſe of GODS wrath.

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QUEST. 4. How is it many of your judgment refuse to join with us in the publike Acknowledgment of uncontroverted guiltineſſe, and that only becauſe we cannot go over our light, to acknowledge that for a ſin which we do eſteem to have been a duty? We deſire to know any paſſage of Scripture, warranding a ſeparation from ſuch a neceſſary duty for that only cauſe.

QUEST. 5. Seeing ye do ſo much cry out againſt us, for retarding the work of Purging, how is it ye do not cordially join and excite to the cenſuring of erroneous Miniſters, who have avowedly ſpit upon their Mothers face, and are daily ſtirring up others to do the like?

QUEST. 6. How is it ſome Miniſters of your judgement take upon them to intimate Faſts, read forth Cauſes of Wrath unto the people to be humbled for, appoint particular diets for going about this work; and this all without the Authority of any Church Judicatorie, no not ſo much as of their own Seſſions? if this were done by others, it would ſeem ſomewhat Prelaticall like.

QUEST. 7. How is it ſome of your judgment take upon them to debarre from the Lords Table, the third part or half the number of their Church-members come to age? This ſeemeth unto us a great ſtep towards ſeparation.

QUEST. 8. We deſire to know what are theſe poſitive ſignes of realt repentance, which ye require in thoſe who are to be received, after ſcandall, unto the fellowſhip of the Church? and why the ſame may not be required in the admiſſion of Church-members?

QUEST. 9. How is it the practiſe of many of your number to caſt out of Seſſions, under one pretence or other, all thoſe almoſt who are of our judgment? and yet cry out ſo much againſt the Act of the late Aſſembly, ordaining not thoſe who differ from us in the matter of Publike Reſolutions: but only ſuch as adhere to the Proteſtation againſt the Aſſemblies to be laid aſide only, from voicing in Presbyteries and Synods, but not at all to be caſt out of Church-Seſſions.

QUEST. 10. What warrand or approven precedent in this or any Reformed Kirk can you ſhow for your admitting Ruling Elders and privat Perſons in your publick meetings to pray publickly among ſo many Miniſters?

QUEST. 11. How upon no other ground, but your own declinature,

nature, [illegible] reassume the power of the Commission 1650. which was surrendered to the Generall Assembly 1651. by a *Quorum*, and the greatest number of the Commissioners, whereof some of your selves were a part? And what Assembly will you finde your selves countable to, which another *Quorum* of your Commission may not also decline upon your own or the like reasons?

QUEST. 12. How can you pretend to Act be vertue of the Commission 1650. which you neither have, nor ever had at any of your Meetings? Have you made up to your selves the whole power, members, *Quorum*, and date of that Commission by your own memories and assertions.

QUEST. 13. Or do you assume to your selves the power of the Commission of the Assemblie 1649. which you have in Print, because you have not the Commission 1650. and will have it beleeved from your own testimonies, that the power of both is one and the same in *Terminis*? which yet will not be found true, and you cannot but know, that the Members and *Quorum* are not the same in both.

QUEST. 14 But if you have an authentick extract of the Commission 1650. Since pretending to that Authority you Act so great things, why is not your Commission Printed with the Acts issueing from you, by vertue thereof that the Authority of it may be known, seeing it is so much questioned in the Power, Members, *Quorum*, and the very being of it?

Sir, We have proponed those that by your answers to them we may know what hopes there is of making up of our wofull Rent; and (if we might take the boldnesse to speak a little to such an Eminent servant of Jesus Christ as ye, whom our conscience beareth witnesse we respect and honour much in the Lord) We would humbly obtest you, If there be any consolations in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, ye would imploy the great power, which we know ye deservedly have amongst these of your Judgement, to make them incline to wayes of Peace and healing. Do we not yet see that our Church is destroyed? The Authoritie of Christs Courts almost mortally wounded? Hath not Unitie in times bypast been this Churches praise, and that which made our Government lovelie unto Forraign Churches? And shall this breach turn irrepareable under our hands? Consider, we intreat you, seriouslie how improbable it is that our Union shall begin at our

uniting in Judgement concerning those Publick [illegible] so much opposed as defection by you, so much defended [illegible] of necessary duty by us. If this be the Method ye resolve to follow, what hope is there of attaining Peace and Union? To what [illegible] serveth all our debates concerning those? May we aske how [illegible] have ye gained unto your minde, by all your pains taken [illegible]? Or how many gaine we to ours? Or when do ye expect that all precious and able Men in this Church shall be one in those? To what purpose then is our mutuall challenges, our answers, replyes, our publick debates, but to irritate one another, and to make our selves ridiculous? When shall we cease thus to strive? Are we not Brethren? How many are our mutuall bands? we are knit together by the tyes of one profession; one holy Calling; one Church; one Countrey; one Covenant; and by the tye of common sufferings; Are we not one in all those? and shall we thus rent asunder for things of small concernment? Surelie then, if lesser then any of those forementioned tyes, Oh we might once see that Scripture verified in us. *The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. How good were it if as Brethren we were dwelling together in Unity, it should be as the precious Oyntment upon the head, that ran down upon* Aarons *beard to the skirts of his garments, as the dew of Hermon, there the Lord should command the blessing, even life for ever more.*

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